

other charges, an expenditure of Rs. 716 per annum per lorry was being incurred; but he would not make any complaint on that score, if the roads were kept in good order. The Member said that he could not see why even after recovering all those tolls and other charges the road should be kept by the Government in such poor condition.

President's reply.—As you yourself have remarked, owing to the very bad monsoon that we have had, the road has been spoiled. The Chief Engineer says that every attempt will be made to maintain the road in good condition. Government will do all that is feasible to keep the road in order.

53. Some defects in the Public Works Department and suggestions for remedying them.

Mr. Kanakku Tampi Champakaraman Sankaran (Member, Kalkulam taluk) began by observing that the P. W. D. had hitherto remained under the guidance of talented Europeans who had left behind them monuments of their work. The Department was now, for the first time in its annals, guided by an Indian, honest and persevering, with experience of the country and its language. He then pointed out some defects in the working of the Department, with a view to have them remedied. In his opinion, the re-organisation of 1910 as also the subsequent re-organisations failed to secure adequate supervision of public works, though the pay of the staff was enhanced by such re-organisations. Though the Executive Engineers and most of the Assistant and Sub-Engineers were very just and sincere, they did not realise their responsibilities, with the result that corruption was rampant in the Department. He then began to speak of the responsibilities of the various officers in the Department, such as the Division Officers, Sub-Division Officers and the Section Officers, and spoke chiefly about the corruption prevailing among Section Officers. (The present duties of the Section Officers were to prepare estimates and bills and submit them to the Division Officers. As those officers were mostly unqualified and inexperienced, the devolution of such duties on them entailed loss on the Government and heavy suffering on the people. The Member requested that those defects might be remedied by the Chief Engineer. The Member also detailed some of the vagaries of Supervisors. (They accepted illegal gratification from contractors before preparing bills for works done.) The Sub-Division Officers were helpless in the matter, as the Supervisors were backed up by the higher authorities. Under the head 'muster-roll labour' the maistries entered the names of some coolies not actually employed, though they were a certain percentage and gave the illegal income resulting therefrom to the Section Officers. False receipts were prepared for works reported to be carried out, but not actually so carried out. The spots where such works were done were reported to be in out-of-the way places, and inspection by the superior officers was impossible in such cases. The money naturally went into the pockets of the Section Officers. Again, the Section Officers themselves executed certain works, the names of some of their own men being put up as the contractors therefor. There was also speculation in the auction sale of avenue trees and of the right of fishing in public tanks. Successive re-organisations of the Department had not served to mitigate the evils complained of. Even if the evils were brought to notice, the most that was done was to transfer the officer concerned which had no deterrent effect. He thought that the fittest punishment for such officers was to be told that their services were dispensed with. Even if that was not possible, the facilities for such malpractices might be removed.

As regards Sub-Division Officers, the Member said that they were responsible officers, but that they served merely as a transmitting medium between the Section Office and the Division Office and that the responsibility of carrying out works should rest with them, they being assisted in big works by the Section Officers. The Section Officers' duties should be of an out-door nature and they should help the Sub-Division Officers, as far as possible, in the preparation of estimates, in the taking

of measurements, etc. They should also submit daily reports of works in progress and devote their whole time to the supervision of works. The preparation of bills should be attended to by the contractors themselves who should submit them to the Sub-Division Officers. By these means, not only could the illegitimate income of Section Officers be put a stop to, but their establishment could also be dispensed with and the discharged men provided for in the Division and the Sub-Division Offices.

As regards the Division Officers, the Member thought that they should go through each item of an estimate received from the subordinate offices to see whether it was necessary before sanctioning the estimate as a whole. They should also see that no estimate was revised without their sanction. Muster-rolls and bills should be checked as thoroughly as possible and the bills should be ordered to be submitted soon after the completion of the respective works.

The Member next spoke about the recruitment of maistries. The maistries should be passed lower subordinates and should be entertained on Rs. 35-50. The present maistries who were mostly unqualified and the dependents of high officials were a set of useless men. 200 qualified maistries on Rs. 35-50 might be appointed. In order that the pension charges might not increase on account of the entertainment of those hands, he suggested that one-tenth of their pay might be withheld every month and that the aggregate sum with interest be paid to them on retirement. They should be held responsible for the maintenance works in the several sections and for safe-guarding the building materials stored, etc. Those men should also be provided with order book and daily report forms.

He further considered that executive officers should not indulge in unnecessary correspondence, that the Manager in the Chief Engineer's Office should be a ministerial officer interchangeable with an officer in the Secretariat, that the Superintendent's place there should be abolished, and that the Managers of P. W. Division Offices should be interchangeable with officers in the Account Office.

Lastly, the Member spoke about the Workshops and Stores Division and stated that it should not be a source of expenditure to the Government, and that, if the work of that Division was supervised properly, it would prove to be a source of revenue. He also pointed out that the formation of the Kodayar Project Division was a failure and that an inspection of that Division would prove the accuracy of his statement. He wished the Chief Engineer to take note of it. He further said that separate Section Officers to supervise irrigation works should be appointed.

President's reply.—The defects pointed out by you in the working of the Public Works Department have been noted. There are rules for guiding the department in its work ; and every endeavour is being made by the department to strictly follow those rules. The P. W. D. Code is now under revision. Your remarks will be considered in that connection and such changes as are considered desirable will be introduced in the light of those remarks.

As a rule, only qualified hands are appointed both in the executive and the ministerial branches. Even as regards maistries, the Chief Engineer says that technically qualified men are preferred whenever available.

The Executive Engineers keep strict watch over the work of the Section Officers and the Sub-Division Officers.

As regards the muster-rolls and receipts, these are checked and passed by the Sub-Division Officers before they draw the cheques for payment. Respectable contractors are engaged and they are encouraged and preferred, provided the rates offered by them are acceptable.

Section Officers are responsible for the progress and supervision of works, subject to the control and supervision of superior officers.

The number of maistries, to which you referred, is regulated as provided for under the head of 'petty supervision' in the sanctioned estimates for works.

As regards the Manager in the Chief Engineer's Office, that post does not exist now. There is a Superintendent and he gets the same scale of pay as the Superintendents in the Secretariat. You want the Manager again. Your suggestion will be considered. You want separate Irrigation Section Officers to be appointed. That matter will also be considered.

54. Revision of the rules relating to ryots' roads.

Mr. D. C. Joseph (Member, Nominated) began by saying that the existing rules relating to the opening of ryots' roads were unworkable and that those rules were framed by the Government under certain peculiar circumstances. He said that members from north Travancore had been speaking about the necessity of opening new roads at several sessions of the Assembly, and that, as they were not satisfied with the replies of the Government, the people of some taluks, *e. g.*, Tiruvalla, came forward and volunteered to open new roads. When such roads were opened, Government took advantage of the same and framed the present inelastic rules. The Member then observed that the people of Travancore were accustomed to get the roads they required as a result of repeated representations, that shifting the responsibility of opening such roads from the Government to the people was an entirely new departure, and that such departure would work hardship unless it was gradual. He described how the people might at first be required to give the lands required for a particular road, receiving only one-half or one-fourth of their value, or even free in certain cases and how, when that condition was complied with, if the remaining work could be done by Government, many such roads might be expected to be opened in the State. Instead of such an easy arrangement, a set of new rules was brought into force purporting to offer facilities which no group of ryots would care to take advantage of. He referred to the mention made in the Dewan's Address to those rules and pointed out the following defects.

The initial difficulty was for the ryots to form themselves into an Association and to register it. The ryots of Travancore had not advanced so far as to unite for common purposes, especially in the matter of spending money. In the next place the Association had to acquire all the lands required for the road, depositing with the Government the sum necessary for meeting the compensation charges in respect of such among those lands as could not be secured free. The actual condition of the ryots had not been understood by the Government if they thought that nobody would refuse to part with their lands for such a purpose. There was nothing in the rules to prevent those who received compensation from using the roads brought into existence by the self-sacrifice of those who gave the lands free for that purpose. Again, the minimum width required, *viz.*, 22 feet, was too much, as no more width was needed for a village cart road than what was necessary for two carts to cross each other. In any case the Member thought that the villages belonging to the depressed classes should be exempted from the operation of such rules.

He then referred to the Administration Report for 1928 and stated that only 50 miles of such roads were taken over by the Government and that it was not clear why the Department had not taken charge of similar roads in other taluks opened two or three years ago. He mentioned the village road opened by the inhabitants of Vambannur and adjoining villages in the Neendakara *pakuthi* three years ago and said that that road had not been taken over by the Government for maintenance. That road which connected the Villukairi-Rajakkamangalam road and the Eraniel-Rajakkamangalam road had already been inspected by the Dewan. The lands surrendered were valuable and both labour and money had been spent on it. If the Government would not take up that road for maintenance on the ground that the people had not formed themselves into an Association as required by the rules, all that he could say in reply was that the rules stood in sore need of modification. The Member concluded by saying that, as Government could see that the rules were impracticable from the little advantage the ryots had been taking of them so far, they should meet the ryots half-way by modifying the rules suitably.

President's reply.—As regards the depressed classes, I may say that they have been already exempted from the operation of the rules *re.* ryots' roads. As you yourself have pointed out, the Dewan has referred to the revision of those rules in